



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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**Mental health information among the resources being provided
during Thursday's City of Benton Harbor Water Resource Fair**

Free bottled water distribution continues, over 119,000 cases provided to date

LANSING, Mich. – Mental health resources are among the information being provided during the City of Benton Harbor Water Resource Fair on Thursday, Nov. 4, from 4 to 7 p.m.

Some of the resources available will include health services, food assistance, water use instruction, nutrition options and information on lead.

"Events like what's taking place in Benton Harbor can disrupt life and routines and cause residents to experience a variety of emotions including fear for their health and their family's health, stress and frustration," said Elizabeth Hertel, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services director. "It can make even everyday challenges more difficult for some people, so we want to make sure City of Benton Harbor residents are aware there is support available either over the phone or in person."

"Many of us this past year have already experienced unprecedented challenges as a result of the pandemic, on top of our normal day-to-day stressors," said Dr. Debra Pinals, MDHHS medical director for Behavioral Health and Forensic Programs. "When you add to that an environmental crisis that disrupts daily routines it can create overwhelming feelings of fear, uncertainty and anxiety. That kind of stress can have impacts on mental and physical health. We encourage you to connect with loved ones and learn about your local community resources – make sure to seek help when it's needed."

The resource fair is being hosted for City of Benton Harbor residents to learn about the health impacts of lead and resources available to help reduce or eliminate lead from their homes. The event is a collaborative effort that will include information and representatives from local community organizations, the City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County Health Department, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, MDHHS and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

It is being held at the Benton Harbor Housing Commission/ Virginia Edwards Community Center, 721 Nate Wells Drive in Benton Harbor. Attendees are asked to wear masks and masks will be available at the event.

Distribution of free bottled water continues with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and volunteers providing 119,223 cases at community

distribution sites and through deliveries to residents who are homebound or lack access to transportation.

Free bottled water is being provided by the state as residents are being encouraged to use bottled water for cooking, drinking, brushing teeth, rinsing foods and mixing powdered infant formula. This action is part of an accelerated, across-the-board effort to reduce the risk of exposure to lead in drinking water while the city replaces all lead service lines.

To arrange water delivery to homebound or residents without transportation in the city of Benton Harbor, contact 211, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The upcoming schedule for bottled water pickup is:

Wednesday, Nov. 3

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller Street, 3 – 6 p.m., (Water loaded into vehicles by volunteers)

Thursday, Nov. 4

- Ebenezer Baptist Church, 214 E. Britain Avenue, 10 a.m.-noon.
- Brotherhood of All Nations, 1286 Monroe Street, 4-6 p.m.
- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller Street, 4.-6 p.m. (Self-service)

Friday, Nov. 5

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller Street, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (Self-service)

Saturday, Nov. 6

- Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor, 600 Nate Wells Sr. Drive, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.,
- Harbor of Hope Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 769 Pipestone Street, 4-6 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 7

- Abundant Life Church of God, 693 Columbus Avenue, 3 - 5 p.m.
- Brotherhood of All Nations, 1286 Monroe Street, 4 - 6 p.m.

The ongoing response in Benton Harbor includes the city, Berrien County Health Department, local community organizations, MDHHS and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

Additional dates and locations for bottled water pick up will be added to make sure community needs are met. Information will be posted on Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe.

To ensure the continued success of bottled water distribution locations in Benton Harbor and to recognize the city residents who have been stepping up to donate their time and talent, the State of Michigan has partnered with local agencies and will begin paying city residents who work at state-supported bottled water distribution sites. Individuals who want to serve as community ambassadors to help distribute water should connect with

an established distribution site. Individuals or groups who want to serve as unpaid volunteers can sign up on the United Way's online platform.

MDHHS is engaging in a long-term effort to eliminate lead action level exceedances, educate communities on the effects of lead in drinking water, and remove lead service lines. These efforts also include recently approved funds to remove lead from homes in the city. Families living in Benton Harbor can apply for this service by filling out and mailing in an application that is available online. Residents also can call 866-691-5323 to obtain information.

For questions about lead, MDHHS can be reached at 866-691-5323 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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City of Benton Harbor Water Resource Fair flyer